

**Amendments to the Specification:**

Please replace specific paragraph [0035] on page 16 of the specification as filed with the amended paragraph set out below.

[0035] The stripping gas used in stripping step (D) preferably comprises a gas selected from the group consisting of nitrogen, hydrogen, carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, any gaseous hydrocarbon with 5 carbon atoms or less, natural gas, methane, and mixtures thereof. Step (D) is performed for a time period sufficient to achieve a molar fraction of dissolved molecular oxygen less than about 0.1 in the stripped hydrocarbon liquid. Preferably, the stripped liquid ~~hydrocarbons~~ hydrocarbon is substantially free of molecular oxygen, i.e., has a molar fraction for dissolved molecular oxygen less than about 0.1.